



South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



SD LEGISLATURE RECOGNIZES SDNG FOR 150 YEARS OF SERVICE TO STATE AND COUNTRY

Senate Commemoration 10, introduced by 30 senators and 69 representatives, congratulates and honors the South Dakota National Guard on the one hundred fiftieth anniversary of the South Dakota National Guard.

The South Dakota National Guard lineage can be traced back to the days of the Dakota Cavalry, originally formed on January 27, 1862.

Units of the South Dakota National Guard have served with great distinction in federal active service in support of wars and conflicts such as: the Spanish-American War, the Philippine Insurrection, World War I, World War II, the Korean War, Operation Just Cause, the Persian Gulf War, operations in Kosovo, Operation Provide Comfort, Operation Northern Watch, Operation Southern Watch, Operation Noble Eagle, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation New Dawn.

The commemoration also thanked the SDNG for their support in response to state disasters such as blizzards, fires, tornados and floods.

Inside this issue:

Governor Signs ESGR Statement of Support	2
Four Chaplains Service	2
VABHHCS Goes Live With Tele-ICU	3
Bowen Takes Polar Plunge	3
VA Budget Request	4
VA/NASDVA Sign Pact	4
VA Expands Suicide Prevention Efforts	5
Upcoming Events	6



GOVERNOR SIGNS ESGR STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

Gov. Dennis Daugaard demonstrated his support of the South Dakota National Guard soldiers and airmen by signing a Statement of Support Thursday, Feb. 9, in Pierre.

"The purpose of the Statement of Support is to get employers of the Guard and Reserve men and women to publicly show their support," said the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve State Chair, Ron Mielke. "It is a way for the senior leader of an organization, in this case the Governor of South Dakota, to show that he, and the organization he represents, are willing to fulfill the rights and responsibilities of service members."

The Statement of Support confirms that Governor Daugaard joins other employers in pledging that:

- We fully recognize, honor and enforce the Uniformed Services Employment and Re-Employment Rights Act (USERRA).
- Our managers and supervisors will have the tools they need to effectively manage those employees who serve in the Guard and Reserve.
- We will continually recognize and support our country's service members and their families in peace, crises and in war.

Gov. Daugaard's 22 cabinet members are also signing the Statement of Support, said Mielke.

"Our goal is to have 275 Statements of Support signed this year by employers of Guard and Reserve members," said Mielke. "We are fortunate to have great employers in South Dakota, whether they are from the public sector, counties, school districts or our private employers. Part of our goal is to maintain a positive relationship between the employers and service members. We went more than four years without having an issue go to the Department of Labor."

ESGR is a Department of Defense agency that will develop and promote a culture in which all American employers support and value the military service of their employees with ESGR as the principal advocate within DoD.



FOUR CHAPLAINS SERVICE

People across the country take this week, National Salute to Veterans Week, to honor the heroes of past and present while also drawing attention to veterans' issues.

Four men lost their lives on a ship in 1943. Sixty-nine years later a community came together to honor their lives and their sacrifices.

The Four Chaplains service was held on Sunday in Sturgis as a way to honor the Four Chaplains, as well as a salute to hospitalized veterans.

Four World War II chaplains, George L. Fox, a Methodist, Alex D. Goode, of Jewish denomination, John P. Washington, a Roman Catholic, and Clark V. Poling, of the Reformed Church of America, lost their lives when the S.S. Dorchester was sunk off the coast of Greenland on Feb. 2, 1943.

Nineteen wreaths were placed in honor of the fallen chaplains, who served their country honorably.



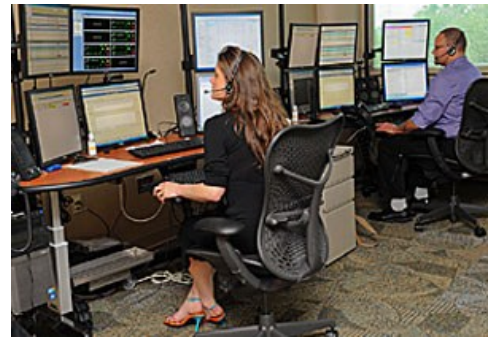
VABHHCS GOES LIVE WITH TELE-ICU

A “second set of eyes” can now monitor patients at VA hospitals across the VA Midwest Health Care Network. This week, the VA Black Hills Health Care System went “live” with Tele-ICU and working collaboratively with the Minneapolis VA Medical Center to provide this new service to hospitalized intensive care veterans at the Fort Meade VA Medical Center.

The integrated, Minneapolis-based team of critical care nurses and intensivists (doctors who specialize in critical care medicine) is now available 24/7 to aid patients and clinicians in ICUs at VA hospitals in Minneapolis, MN, Fargo, ND, Omaha, NE, Iowa City and Des Moines, IA, Fort Meade and Sioux Falls, SD. Seventy-five ICU beds can be monitored by a highly trained team of critical care specialists based out of the Minneapolis VA hospital. This Regional Tele-ICU Center is the first of its kind in the VA.

The Minneapolis-based Tele-ICU is equipped with a bank of monitoring screens that show vital signs (heart rate and blood pressure) and lab values. There is a live two-way audio-video feed which instantly connects the veteran, the bedside provider and the team of critical care nurses and intensivist in real time. The video resolution is so fine, intensivists can see pupils constrict in response to light.

With several large monitors showing data and the patient simultaneously, clinicians have clinical data at their finger tips, which is crucial during a critical consultation.



BOWEN TAKES THE PLUNGE

Saturday afternoon while many of us were relaxing in our warm cozy homes, Kevin Bowen, Field Officer for the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, was outside taking the plunge! Over twenty participants took the “polar plunge” in an effort to raise funds for the Special Olympics. For most people, once would be enough. But not Kevin Bowen; this is Kevin’s fourth year of participating in the “polar plunge.”

Donned in his Uncle Sam outfit, Bowen was the second to take the plunge in this year’s event and raised over \$250 to assist the Special Olympics participants.



VA BUDGET REQUEST TOPS \$140 BILLION FOR VETERANS PROGRAMS

With more than 1 million active-duty personnel scheduled to join the ranks of America's 22 million Veterans during the next five years, the President has proposed a \$140.3 billion budget for the United States Department of Veterans Affairs for the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1.

"As our newest veterans return home, we must give them the care, the benefits, the job opportunities and the respect they have earned, while honoring our commitments to veterans of previous eras," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki.

Shinseki said the budget proposal, which must be approved by Congress, would fund services for newly discharged veterans, continue the drive to end homelessness among veterans, improve access to benefits and services, reduce the disability claims backlog, improve the Department's collaboration with the Defense Department and strengthen its information-technology program that is vital for delivering services to Veterans.

"As we turn the page on a decade of war, we are poised at an historic moment for our Nation's armed forces," Shinseki said. "The President has charged VA to keep faith with those who served when they rejoin civilian life."

The budget request includes \$64 billion in discretionary funds, mostly for medical care, and \$76 billion for mandatory funds, mostly for disability compensation and pensions.

If approved by Congress, the new spending levels would support a health care system with 8.8 million enrollees and growing benefits programs serving nearly 12 million Servicemembers, veterans, family members and survivors, including the eighth largest life insurance program in the nation; education benefits for more than 1 million Americans; home loan guarantees for more than 1.5 million veterans and survivors; plus the largest national cemetery system in the country.

Details on the budget can be found at: <http://www.va.gov/budget/products.asp>.

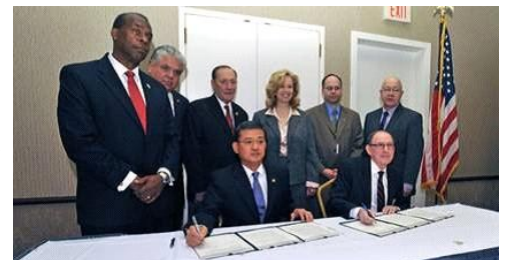


VA AND STATE ASSOCIATION SIGN PARTNERSHIP PACT

Building upon a 66-year partnership with the states, the VA has signed a formal agreement with the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA) to enhance their relationship. The agreement pledges the two groups to maintain "effective communications, an exchange of ideas and information, identification of emerging needs, and continuous reevaluation of existing programs."

NASDVA represents the state departments of Veterans affairs in dealings with the VA and with veterans residing in their respective states. The involvement of state governments in veterans affairs goes back to the American Revolution, with the federal government becoming involved after the Civil War. In 1946, NASDVA was created to coordinate programs between the VA and the states, territories and the District of Columbia.

Secretary Shinseki signed the agreement Feb. 13 during the NASDVA mid-winter conference in Alexandria, Va. Charles Claussen is attending this conference on behalf of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs.



VA EXPANDS SUICIDE PREVENTION EFFORTS

The VA is expanding its efforts to prevent suicide through several new initiatives that increase the availability of services for veterans, servicemembers and their families.

The new initiatives include a new, free, confidential text-messaging service in the existing Veterans Crisis Line, introduction of toll-free access from Europe, and collaboration with Vets Prevail and Vets4Warriors, two groups providing crisis help to veterans, servicemembers and their families.

"Offering text messaging services will help the VA reach more Veterans and their friends and families," said Dr. Janet Kemp, VA's national mental health director for suicide prevention. "We are working to meet their needs by communicating through multiple channels – over the phone, through online chat, and now via text, which provides quick, easy access to support. The VA wants all veterans to know that confidential support is only a text message away."

Since its founding July 2007, the VA's Veterans Crisis Line and the later Chat Service have received 500,000 calls and engaged in 31,000 chats resulting in over 18,000 rescues of veterans in immediate crisis.

Now, in addition to the Veterans Crisis Line (1-800-273-8255 and Press 1) and online chat (www.VeteransCrisisLine.net), veterans and servicemembers in crisis—and their friends and families—may text free of charge to 83-8255 to receive confidential, personal and immediate support. The text service is available, like the Veterans Crisis Line and online chat, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year and connects a user with a specially trained VA professional – many who are veterans themselves.

As a part of the effort to extend the VA's reach, veterans and members of the military community in Europe may now receive free, confidential support from the European Military Crisis Line, a new initiative recently launched by the VA. Callers in Europe may dial 0800-1273-8255 or DSN 118 to receive confidential support from responders at the Veterans Crisis Line in the U.S.

The VA's Veterans Crisis Line continues to add external resources to provide veterans with additional support. Two of these organizations include Vets Prevail (www.VetsPrevail.org) and Vets4Warriors (www.Vets4Warriors.com).

In December, Vets Prevail launched a chat service that connects Veterans to caring responders who provide information on a wide variety of resources. If the veteran is in crisis or needs mental health support, the conversation is then seamlessly transferred to a VA Veterans Crisis Line responder.

Vets4Warriors has helped thousands of their peers connect with confidential assistance through a free hotline (1-855-838-8255/1-855-VET-TALK) and online chat (www.Vets4Warriors.com). If a veteran is in need of professional crisis or mental health support, Vets4Warriors' responders will transfer the veteran to a responder at the Veterans Crisis Line.

For more information about VA's suicide prevention program, visit: http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/



REISCH FEATURED SPEAKER ON SOUTH DAKOTA PERSPECTIVE

Major General Timothy Reisch, Secretary of the South Dakota Department of the Military and Adjutant General for the South Dakota National Guard, was the featured speaker on Monday's "South Dakota Perspective."

"South Dakota Perspective" airs the second Monday of the month and features the Governor and other state officials.

During his interview, Gen. Reisch addressed the strength of the South Dakota National Guard, deployments, federal budget cuts and the impacts on South Dakota and the role of the National Guard during the 2011 flood in South Dakota.



Upcoming Events

Feb. 18—SFVAHCC Variety Show

Mar. 7—VABHHCS Veterans Creative Arts Show—Fort Meade

Mar. 19—VABHHCS Veterans Creative Arts Show—Hot Springs

Apr. 27-29—VABHHCS Women's Retreat—Fort Meade

May 21-22—South Dakota Veterans Commission Meeting—Pierre

July 21-22—Sioux Falls Air Show

Aug. 27-29—VSO Annual Benefits School—Pierre

Audry Ricketts, Public Information Officer
South Dakota Department of the Military
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs
Soldiers and Sailors Building
425 E Capitol Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501
Phone: 605-773-8242
E-mail address: audry.ricketts@state.sd.us
Web site: <http://mva.sd.gov>

